

MEMORANDUM

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October 5, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: MR. KISSINGER

FROM: MORI/CDF C05106320 JOHN H. HOLDRIDGE *John H. Holdridge*

SUBJECT: COSVN Directive on War and Ceasefire Plans

The mid-September "COSVN Directive 06," which sets forth the enemy's current plans for military actions and a subsequent ceasefire, has been described in detail to us (Tab A). 25X1

This is a highly significant document, and provides considerable insights into the enemy's current thinking. Of special interest is the other side's anticipation of difficulties and reverses in a ceasefire situation. The following is a summary and analysis of the directive.

Military Plans and Objectives

"From now to the U. S. Presidential elections, we are determined to hit hard to force the enemies to accept a political settlement to end the war. If Nixon remains so intransigent as to prolong the war past the election day, then no matter who is elected, we will continue to fight on until the U. S. and puppets are defeated..." On the other hand, "we are determined not to let the war continue another two or three years."

(This probably reflects the growing belief that the President will be re-elected and the necessity of planning for both ceasefire and prolonged war situations. The directive also seeks to reassure war-weary cadre and troops that the war will not go on forever.)

"We will continue to hit hard in Quang Tri, Thua Thien, Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, and Kontum (provinces). We will try to expand our control in these areas and draw enemy troops there so that pacification in the Mekong Delta and the provinces around Saigon can be attacked more successfully..."

(This is a revealing description of basic enemy strategy. Note that the Delta and the provinces around Saigon are the ultimate priority targets.)

SECRET

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SECRET

2

"We cannot afford to use siege tactics in every province, every area. At An Loc and Quang Tri, we seized nothing but rubber trees and bricks. We could not keep the people..."

(The enemy will probably refrain from future attacks against well-defended provincial capitals and will concentrate rather on surrounding them and preventing the escape of refugees to GVN-controlled areas.)

Local forces are to attack when they have the opportunity and are not to wait for main force attacks -- in fact, they will not even be given advanced notice of main force attacks. Local forces will be reinforced by main force battalions and sapper groups and are to be targetted against GVN territorial forces in order to eliminate GVN control of the countryside and to establish a force in being for a ceasefire situation.

(The enemy probably doubts that he could effectively coordinate local force operations with main force attacks; moreover, if local forces know when and where the main forces will attack, they will remain inactive and let the main forces do the fighting. Main force plans are probably also restricted for security reasons, since local forces may be penetrated. In any case, this should decrease the effectiveness of enemy offensive operations.)

"When there is a political settlement, we must seize every opportunity to attack the enemies, expand our control, destroy enemy outposts, and raise our flag." This must be done with local forces, since the northern main force troops are strangers who cannot claim to be "People's Liberation Armed Forces" and, therefore, must be kept out of sight in remote areas.

(The attacks described above are no doubt to take place just prior to an anticipated ceasefire. It is interesting that northern troops are regarded as a potential embarrassment in a ceasefire situation.)

Preparations for the Post-Settlement Struggle

Hanoi will not delay signing an agreement to end the war just because some areas are not yet strong enough (to compete with anti-Communist forces). "Some areas will survive a political settlement, but others will not.... Comrades in certain provinces may be defeated not only by the enemies [i. e. GVN], but also by the people, for example, by religious elements such as the Cao Dai."

SECRET

SECRET

3

GVN Precautions

The GVN is preparing for a political settlement and subsequent political struggle by neutralizing the VC infrastructure, suspending hamlet elections, and replacing uncommitted elements with those loyal to the GVN; moreover, the U.S. is pouring war materiel into South Vietnam and turning bases over to the GVN "because it is afraid that later, when there is a political settlement with international control, it will be unable to ship materiel to the South due to the agreement it signs."

Nature of a Settlement

"As to the substance of a political settlement...we intend to realize an on-the-spot ceasefire. Our position on a tripartite government is that there must be negotiations between us and the Saigon puppet government first, then both sides will determine the method by which a third element is to enter the scene. Only in this way can we insert our own people into the third element...."

Violence to Continue After a Ceasefire

"Although the war will stop with a ceasefire, and the big guns will fall silent, the small guns will remain in action and such activities as tyrant elimination, abduction, and assassination will continue under various disguises. If we have no secret armed forces, we will be unable to accomplish anything.... Each district has been required to develop at least a battalion before there is a political settlement."

Importance of Legal Cadre

Legal cadre (those with a legal cover and able to operate in GVN-controlled areas) are to play a key role in organizing the political and secret military infrastructure, and when the time is ripe, they will surface and "lead the populace to wage political struggle." (Other sources indicate heavy emphasis on legal cadre infiltration and subversion of the GVN apparatus, the ARVN, and other institutions -- such as newspapers.)

Morale Problems Among the Cadre

This directive was intended not only to provide the cadre with guidelines and marching orders, but was also intended to stimulate improved performance and morale, since "despite [our] victories, our basic shortcomings

SECRET

SECRET

4

still exist." Moreover, "sub-region and province Party committees have not been able to transform the morale of cadre and Party members into concrete action nor bring them into agreement with the Party."

Cadre are instructed to study the 42 year history of the ups and downs of the Party to make them aware of the Party's ability to triumph over all sorts of "vissicitudes and hard times." The Party knows what it's doing, and its orders should be obeyed in the current struggle.

Conclusion

Clearly, the other side does not believe that the post-settlement political struggle is going to be either easy or bloodless, even if they are able to develop the in-place political and military assets they envisage -- which is highly unlikely. The directive is replete with references to the poor morale and inefficacy of the cadre and casts doubt on the ability of either the cadre or the troops to carry out their assigned tasks before and after a ceasefire.

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